

inspection report

Fostering Services

Horizon Fostering Services

Kingsbury house
468 Church Lane
Kingsbury
London
NW9 8UA

28th February 2005 & 19 March 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard Exceeded (Commendable)
- 3 - Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Horizon Fostering Services

Tel No

020 8200 2355

Address

Kingsbury house, 468 Church Lane, Kingsbury, London,
NW9 8UA

Fax No

020 8200 2366

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

G110000247

Name of Registered Provider

Kingsbury House

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Jill Plummer

Date of first registration

20th November 2003

Date of latest registration certificate

26th May 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

9/12/03

Date of Inspection Visit		28th February 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Bernard Burrell	
Name of Inspector	2		
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Shadab Ahmad (Director) Jill Plummer (Manager)	

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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- 3. Management of the fostering service**
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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Horizon Fostering Services. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Horizon Fostering Services (HFS) is an independent fostering provider based in North West London.

According to the agency's Statement of Purpose, the service aims to provide a range of placements for children and young people, both short term and permanent. The agency sees its objectives as helping to alleviate the needs of children who are temporarily or permanently separated from their families and to promote high level of care, encouragement, safety and security for children without families able to care for them.

The agency sees its role as complimenting the fostering services provided by local authorities. The agency therefore works in partnership with local authorities to help achieve better outcomes for children placed with their carers.

The agency offers training and support to foster carers to help develop their skills and competence in caring.

Recruitment of foster carers is made through various sources, including media advertising. The assessment and approval process takes between 4-6 months. All information, including satisfactory references are obtained during the assessment process.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

This inspection took place over two days- including attendance at a fostering panel meeting, telephone discussions with foster carers, a local authority placement service and questionnaire survey to looked after children and young people.

The inspection process was assisted with input from panel chair, director of the agency, fostering manager, social work staff and administrative officer.

The findings indicated the fostering service is managed well and offering a good quality, reliable and professional service plus support to LAC and foster carers.

There were a number of significant improvements since the last inspection. These included support and training offered to foster carers, securing and promoting the welfare of looked after children and young people and management of administrative records.

The inspector was fully satisfied with the improvements in areas such as the panel policy, organisation and operation. The panel is now better structured, managed and chaired. It has a diverse membership representing key areas of children and family social care issues.

The inspection findings also indicated a shortfall in social work staff at the agency. Additional work is also needed to recruit more foster carers and to ensure all prospective carers attend the panel meetings when their applications are been considered.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

This standard was inspected and met the requirements of the National Minimum Standards. The document has been reviewed and updated and contains all relevant information as required by the NMS.

Fitness to Carry on and Manage the Fostering Service (Standard 2-3)

The two standards were inspected and exceeded the requirements of the NMS. The agency's director is part owner of the service. He has many years relevant training and senior management experience in children and family social care work, including management of a project at the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

Management of the Fostering Service (Standard 4-5)

The two standards were inspected and both exceeded the requirements of the NMS. The inspector was fully satisfied the service is organised, structured and managed to a high level of professionalism. The current fostering manager is well experienced in the management of fostering, children and family social care. She is supported well by the director and panel

members.

There were examples of good management tools and systems, including regular monitoring and review of procedures.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Eight standards were inspected in this section. Standards 6, 7, 11 and 12 exceeded the requirements of the NMS. The remaining standards- except standard 13- met the requirements of the NMS.

The inspection findings indicated the agency has relevant and appropriate policies and procedures that are used by staff and foster carers to help secure and promote the welfare of LAC.

The inspector received satisfactory reports from LAC and other stakeholders who have all reported satisfaction with the agency's work in this area.

The inspector saw example of one complaint received by the agency and was satisfied it was appropriately investigated with satisfactory outcome.

The agency will need to ensure more monitoring is carried out to help ensure the educational needs of Looked After Children is fully met.

Recruitment, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training (Standards 15-23)

Nine standards were inspected. Number 16 exceeded the requirements of the NMS. All other standards except number 17, met the requirements of the NMS.

The inspector was fully satisfied appropriate checks, references and monitoring of all persons working in and for the agency has been carried out satisfactorily.

The evidence examined, reports from foster carers, some of the LAC and other stakeholders reported satisfaction with the efficient management of the service, its employment practices, training and support provided.

Standard 17 had a shortfall relating to inadequate numbers of supervising social workers employed by the agency. The agency has recognised this shortfall and the need for urgent action to address this.

Records (Standards 24-25)

The two standards were inspected and both exceeded the requirements of the NMS. The inspector was fully satisfied with the agency's comprehensive and highly organised recording and administrative systems.

There was also satisfactory policy and procedural guidelines that are followed by all staff.

Fitness of Premises (Standards 26)

This standard was inspected and met the requirements of the NMS. The agency's premises are suitable for its current level of operations.

Financial Requirements (Standards 27-29)

The two standards were inspected and met the requirements of the NMS. The director provided information about the agency's financial operations. These indicated the agency is financially viable with appropriate auditing and accounting systems in place.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

The findings in this standard indicated the agency has made good progress since the last inspection. The panel is now better structured, managed and staffed by members with relevant and varied professional experiences and skills.

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)**(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)**

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

**Lead Regulatory
Inspector****Bernard Burrell****Signature****Second Inspector****Signature****Regulation Manager****Gail Freeman****Signature****Date****05/05/2005**

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	
1	21	FS17	<p>The registered provider must ensure that the agency has adequate number of suitably qualified, experienced and registered social work staff to carry out the aims and objectives of the agency.</p> <p>The registered provider must also ensure it recruits adequate number of foster carers to help meet the increasing numbers of Looked After Children been referred to the service.</p>	30/06/05

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS13	<p>The registered provider should ensure foster care applicants attend the panel meetings and be interviewed by the panel members.</p> <p>The panel should aim to rely less on the freelance assessment social workers representing the views and opinions of foster care applicants at panel meetings.</p>

2	FS17	The registered provider should ensure the current caseload allocation of about 16 cases allocated to the more experienced supervising social worker is reviewed and reduce to a more manageable level.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent	2
Survey of placing authorities	NO
Foster carer survey	YES
Foster children survey	YES
Checks with other organisations and Individuals	YES
• Directors of Social services	NO
• Child protection officer	NO
• Specialist advisor (s)	NO
• Local Foster Care Association	NO
Tracking Individual welfare arrangements	YES
• Interview with children	NO
• Interview with foster carers	YES
• Interview with agency staff	YES
• Contact with parents	NO
• Contact with supervising social workers	YES
• Examination of files	YES
Individual interview with manager	YES
Information from provider	YES
Individual interviews with key staff	YES
Group discussion with staff	YES
Interview with panel chair	YES
Observation of foster carer training	NO
Observation of foster panel	YES
Inspection of policy/practice documents	YES
Inspection of records	YES
Interview with individual child	NO
Date of Inspection	28/02/05
Time of Inspection	9:30AM
Duration Of Inspection (hrs)	20

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 4 - Standard Exceeded | (Commendable) |
| 3 - Standard Met | (No Shortfalls) |
| 2 - Standard Almost Met | (Minor Shortfalls) |
| 1 - Standard Not Met | (Major Shortfalls) |

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspection findings indicated the agency's Statement of Purpose contained in the recently revised and rewritten Foster Carers Handbook fully meets this requirement of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and exceed it in several areas.

The revised statement is written clearly and is user friendly. The Foster Carers Handbook has clear index guidelines covering key areas that foster carers need to know about, including information about Looked After Children (LAC) legislation, children's rights and how they are to be promoted.

The guide also offers clear advice on behaviour management, support service, LAC advocacy agencies, administration of medication, keeping children safe, restraint, how to achieve safe caring and help young people prepare for independent living.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

This assessment of this standard was made through interviews with the director, fostering manager, social workers and chair of the panel. The inspector also examined professional records, qualifications, experiences and professional development plans for staff.

Indirect observation was also used as part of the assessment process of this standard.

The findings indicated each of the person involved in carrying on and managing the service is suitably qualified and highly experienced in children and family social care work.

The director has been carrying on the business since 2001. His professional background includes 8 years experience in local authority children and family services, team manager at the National Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), former member of the Fostering Adoption Team, supervisor of social work students and project management work at the NSPCC.

The fostering manager is a qualified social worker with several years senior management experience in various social work settings, including a local authority fostering team and practice manager of a fostering service. She is now working towards her NVQ4 management qualification.

The social worker is qualified and has a variety of experience in children and family, including work in local authority foster resources team, asylum team plus work with young people age 16-25.

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

As indicated above, the inspection findings indicated the service is managed by people with varied and strong professional background, skill and experience in various areas of children and family social care.

The findings indicated each staff underwent a thorough and appropriate recruitment process. Satisfactory references, police and CRB checks were available for examination.

The inspector interviewed each of the senior employees of the agency and was fully satisfied they had sound understanding, knowledge and experience of fostering, plus ability to promote and ensure the safety and welfare of the children and young people.

The inspector also received positive feedback from foster carers, a local social services authority asylum team managers and some children and young people. The general consensus was satisfaction with the professional and caring attitude of the agency staff.

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The inspection findings indicated the agency has clear management and organisational structure that is made known to all stakeholders. The inspector's observation of staff at work indicated a strong professional culture and good work ethics. Staff spoke confidently and reassuringly to carers and records showed consistency and professionalism in communication and follow-ups.

The agency has clear procedures for monitoring and reviewing its services. The director gave examples of changes that have taken place to improve the efficiency of the service, including consistent programme of supervision for all persons working for the agency.

There were clear procedures governing the recruitment and support of foster carers plus example of support given. Appropriate documentation and records were available for examination. These included reports of supervisory visits to foster carers' home, discussions and meetings with Looked After Children and young people, plus supervision records of staff.

Appropriate training programmes were also in place for staff, carers and independent social workers.

The inspector was shown examples of how the service is monitored to measure quality performance. These included the Fostering Services Consultation Form used to get the views, suggestions and opinions of carers. There was also evidence that the children and young people, plus other stakeholders been consulted about the overall operation of the service.

The inspector was also given a copy of the agency's organisational planning and development programme up to 2007.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

1

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

0

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.	0
Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:	0
Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:	0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4) The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	4
<p>As indicated elsewhere in this report, the inspector was fully satisfied the fostering service is managed in a reliable, professional and efficient manner.</p> <p>There were clear procedures for daily management of the service. The in-house social workers had clear job descriptions and knew their roles and responsibilities. The administrative staff had good professional insight into the operational objectives of the service plus needs of the LAC and carers.</p> <p>Documentation and confidential records were managed, organised and stored safely.</p> <p>There were adequate management plans and procedures in place to manage the service when the director or manager is absent.</p> <p>The manager reported she is well supported by the director and staff. Staff informed the inspector they are supported well by the management who offer formal and informal supervision, plus offer advice and suggestions when needed.</p> <p>The manager showed evidence of supervision carried out with freelance social workers attached to the service. The evidence included editing by the manager of Form F assessments and meetings to discuss areas of concern identified during the assessment process.</p> <p>Several of the foster carers who replied to the questionnaire survey reported satisfaction with the way the service is managed and operated.</p>		

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The manager and director gave detailed descriptions of the process involved in recruiting and selecting foster carers. The inspector was also shown several examples of foster carers' files.

The inspection of these files indicated each had a check list of things that needed to be in place before an agreement can be made with a prospective carer. The check list included an assessment process chart that places obligation on the service to visit the prospective foster care home, carry out assessment of the environment, including risk assessment.

The evidence seen by the inspector included recommendations made to prospective foster carers about what was needed to be done to create a safe environment for the children and young people. The monitoring exercise and monthly visits carried out by the supervising social workers also help to identify issues that might impact on the wellbeing, safety and security of the children and young people.

The fostering service also has clear policy guidelines about the environmental standards each foster care home should meet. These are in line with the NMS. Documented records showed good support is offered to foster carers to help manage any or potential short falls in this area.

In addition, the recently revised Foster Carers Handbook outlined clearly, several key areas relating to health and safety that must be promoted and maintained in each foster care home. Carers are required to record and notify the service of any issues that are likely to impact on the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their homes.

The panel also discuss and make recommendations relating home environmental issues as part of its procedures.

The inspector was fully satisfied that safety, security and healthy environment is promoted and monitored well by the fostering service as part of its safe caring objectives.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The foster carers currently contracted to Horizon Fostering Service come from a range of cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. This variety is also reflective of the looked after children and young people.

The fostering service is made up of a diversified work force. The diversity is also reflected in the panel membership.

The fostering service has an equal opportunity policy that focuses on how it intends to achieve diversity and equality across its services and work force. The evidence seen on case files indicated each foster carer is given a copy of this policy and relevant training and supervision is provided.

The inspector observed a panel meeting and was satisfied the members work to promote diversity in the applications they assessed and approved.

The agency has placed several children and young people who are asylum seekers. These LAC come from different cultural, religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds. The diversity of their needs have been fully recognised by the assessing social workers.

The evidence examined on files indicated every effort is made by the service to meet these diversified needs. Good effort is also been made to ensure right placement matching to help achieve the best outcomes for the LAC.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)

Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

As indicated in the above standard, the evidence examined by the inspector, indicated that good effort is been made to ensure the right placement matching is achieved in each case.

The inspector noted that a number of placements were made that reflected religious and cultural similarities between the carers and looked after children and young people. In addition, placements are also made where the carer is well experienced and has sound understanding of how best to meet the assessed needs of looked after children and young people, for example children and young people with disabilities.

The inspector was satisfied placement matching is thoroughly discussed at the panel meetings and recommendations are followed through. One of the cases discussed at the panel meeting attended by the inspector involved a foster care couple who specified the age and gender for the children they were hoping to have in their home. They gave reasons indicating their choice was based on their abilities and skills to adequately meet the assessed needs of the children and young people placed.

The fostering service also ensures that foster carers have as much information as possible about the backgrounds of each child/young person placed. This helps foster carers to have better understanding the personalities and needs of children and young people, plus how best to work with the agency to meet those needs.

The inspector observed a social worker offering advice and support to a foster carer who had recently taken in a child. The advice offered was designed to reassure the carer and about action plans been considered to help manage the behaviour of the child.

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)

The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The findings indicated the fostering service has an up to date child protection policy and procedural guideline. Each foster carer is given a copy and receives induction training and support in this area.

The recordings on case files plus interview with key staff, verified that monthly supervisions visits, monitoring of files and diaries, network meetings and Looked After Children reviews are used to monitor the safety and wellbeing of the children placed.

The inspector was satisfied that all required references, CRB and other statutory checks are carried out for each carer and other significant persons who have daily or direct contacts with the children and young people in the homes.

In addition, the agency's children guide offer advice and information to children and young people about sources of help if they experience problems whilst being looked after. The supervising social workers also meet with the children and young people independently of the foster carers.

Foster carers are also offered regular supervision, ongoing training and updates and the agency maintain close links with the relevant local authorities children services.

Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:

0

%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)

The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The agency has an updated policy and procedural guideline document which is given to each foster carer. The guideline stipulates how contacts should be organised, managed and monitored.

Guidelines are also given in the care plans of each child/young person where contacts with families and friends need to be supported.

The report received from carers indicated they encouraged and facilitate contact arrangements where possible. Carers also assist children and young people to prepare for

contacts, for example- with transportation arrangements.

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)

The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The inspection findings showed that the agency has clear objectives of how it hopes to work with foster carers and LAC. Foster carers are required and encouraged to keep in touch with the agency through various methods, including attending carers meetings, reviews and training programmes.

Similarly, the agency has given guidelines to children and young people on how they should let the agency or other relevant persons know about their concerns or problems during their time in foster care.

Looked After Children are also informed about their rights in the Children and Young Person's Guide. In addition, the recorded information on case files showed evidence of meetings and discussions between supervising social workers and the children and young people been looked after.

Some of the children and young people who completed the survey questionnaire reported they have met or been in touch with the agency's workers and have been able to communicate their views, concerns and opinions.

The inspector interviewed the agency staff and was briefed about meetings held with children and young people independent from their foster carers. The inspector was fully satisfied the agency is making good efforts to seek the views of the children and young people plus ensure action is followed through where necessary.

The inspector was also satisfied up to date recordings are kept of these meetings and views expressed.

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)

The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

During this inspection, one Looked After Child underwent medical treatment in hospital. The agency' manager briefed the inspector about this plus sent relevant notification to the CSCI area office.

The manager was also observed taking keen interest in the welfare and health status of this child by talking to relevant parties, including the foster carer and medical professionals.

The agency has a policy and procedure dealing with the health care needs of children and young people. Foster carers are expected to follow the procedure, including getting permission from birth parents when and where possible. Foster carers are also given guidance in the management of medication for children and young people in the homes.

All children and young people are registered with GPs, dentist and optician in their residential locality. Foster carers are required to keep up to date diary recordings of any health issues affecting the children and young people. The inspector saw recorded evidence of where foster carers have notified the agency about health issues affecting children and young people.

Each foster carer is also given full details of children and young peoples' past medical history, health condition and needs, including information about allergies, current medication and dietary needs.

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)

The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The agency policy outlines clearly its expectations that foster carers will work closely with staff and other educational agencies to help meet the needs of each child in this area.

The agreement places obligation on each foster carer to help ensure each children and young people receive appropriate support to attend school regularly and on time. Foster carers are also expected to assist the children and young people with the school homework and where necessary, work closely with the schools Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

The evidence seen by the inspector indicated several foster carers keep regular contacts with the agency, including updates about issues or challenges relating to a child's education.

There was also recorded evidence of meetings held to discuss the educational matters of children and young people, including plans to assist children and young people with extra-curricular work.

The agency also works closely with the placing authorities social workers to help ensure each child has an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP).

However, the inspection findings indicated more work is needed to help ensure adequate resources and assistance is offered to foster carers so they are better able to support children and young people with their educational work. This could involve additional training to foster carers around educational issues and needs of looked after children and young people.

The agency must ensure closer monitoring of each child/young person's educational progress is carried out to help ensure the best outcomes for each child/young person is achieved.

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspector viewed the training records for foster carers and was satisfied the agency has been making consistent effort to ensure relevant training and development programmes are made available to carers.

Each foster carer is expected to attend certain key core training, including health and safety, first aid, child protection and safe caring. Foster carers are also offered a range of additional training programmes identified during individual and group supervision and meetings.

Foster carers who completed the survey questionnaire reported they received training in managing difficult behaviour, first aid, life work and identity, children in transition, attachment and loss.

The agency's development plan for 2004-2007 includes plans to provide in-house NVQ level 3 childcare and other training courses.

The manager reported the plans also aim to encourage more carers to attend a minimum 3 days of training each year, although this has improved over the last year.

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The inspection findings indicated the director and manager are suitably qualified with sound experience in children and family social work.

The agency has two in-house supervising social workers, one is qualified with relevant background and experience in fostering, asylum and work with young people. The other social worker is planning to retake a unit in the social work qualifications examination. Her background is in adult social care, but the manager confirmed that good support and supervision is offered to this worker. Her caseload is also allocated to reflect her experience.

The inspector also met with the agency's administrator. She has sound understanding of childcare issues and concerns of foster carers and children been looked after. She demonstrated her ability to support the team and help promote the welfare and safety of children and young people.

The agency employs a pool of 28 independent social work assessors. Full employment details, including references are held at the agency's offices. The inspector examined a sample and was satisfied each indicated suitability to work with children and young people.

The inspector met two of the independent social workers at the panel meeting and was fully satisfied with the high professional calibre of their presentation, their knowledge and experience of fostering and childcare issues and regulations.

Total number of staff of the agency:

5

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

1

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****4**

The office is staffed daily by two supervising social workers, an administrative staff, the fostering manager and director. The agency occupies two rooms in a multi-purpose office building.

The inspector's observation indicated staff are managed well, have clear lines of roles and responsibilities. They receive hands on support, supervision and guidance from each other and the senior managers. Each person working for the agency is given a copy of the policy and procedure relating to staff management and support.

Staff are also offered appropriate training and other opportunities to enhance their professionalism, skills and knowledge of childcare issues.

The inspector examined the personnel files of several independent social workers. The evidence showed they are managed and supported satisfactorily by the manager.

The inspector also examined examples of draft Form F assessments completed by independent social workers. The draft assessments were carefully reviewed by the manager and returned to the social workers with comments, advice and suggestions to help improve and prepare final version for the panel meetings.

Foster carers who completed the survey questionnaire reported their satisfaction with the management of the service and reliability and support of staff.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****2**

The agency currently has two supervising social workers who deal with daily enquiries from foster carers and looked after children. Both staff also offer advice and support to foster carers. One staff is qualified in social work and has more relevant fostering and childcare experience.

The other staff is currently preparing to retake a unit in her social work qualification examination.

The agency also has a pool of about 28 independent social workers who are all qualified with varying degrees of experience in fostering, children and family social work. However, not all of them are currently engaged in carrying out assessments for the agency.

The agency has recognised it must recruit additional qualified social workers to help carry out the task of reviews and supervision of carers, children and young people. The director and manager informed the inspector there is corporate plan to employ at least 3 full time social workers to support foster carers by June 2005. There is also plan to employ an additional 2 full-time social workers by March 2006.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The agency has clear policy and guidelines about its recruitment and employment practices relating to how it plans to promote equality of opportunity and retention of staff. Staff are also required to be fully committed to the guidelines and principles, plus work with foster carers to promote these objectives.

The inspector had discussion with staff and was satisfied they are complying with these guidelines. The reports from foster carers and the children and young people, indicated satisfaction with the equitable treatment given.

The agency also ensures relevant references and employment application procedures are followed according to its own guidelines and other professionally accepted practices. The inspector viewed the procedures relating to disciplinary matters and was satisfied they complied with standard employment practices.

Staff and carers reported they are adequately supported and satisfied with the range of support they received from the agency.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)

There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The manager showed the inspector examples of staff supervision meetings. These contain information about identified training and professional development needs of staff. There were recorded information about plans to help each staff maintain and enhance their skills, knowledge and competencies.

The inspector was satisfied that reliable and consistent support is offered to the staff who is planning to retake her social work qualification examination. Support and advice is also offered to independent social workers to help enhance areas of their professional work.

The inspector also saw evidence verifying that staff have taken steps to updated their professional accreditation, including registration with the General Social Care Council (GSCC).

The agency plans to employ a training and development officer by March 2007 when it hopes to have at least 8 additional full-time social work staff and relocation to larger premises.

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5) All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The agency has a revised policy document outlining its supervision and support contract with staff. The record shows each staff has received a copy of this document.</p> <p>The manager briefed the inspector about the range of direct support offered to staff to help ensure they are accountable. The support includes supervision, which is mainly the responsibility of the manager and assistance from the director. The manager also supervises independent social workers assigned to the agency.</p> <p>The culture of the office also ensures information is shared and staff are fully aware of each other's workload, issues and movements.</p>		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6) The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The evidence seen by the inspector indicated each foster carer is given a copy of the policy and guidelines about the agency's roles in working with and supporting them.</p> <p>The reports from foster carers indicated satisfaction with the training and skills development opportunities offered by the agency. Carers also attend meetings where they are able to share their experiences and concerns, plus receive support and help from each other.</p> <p>The examination of foster carers' files indicated consistency in supervised visits, despite the current social work staff shortfall. The inspector discussed this area with the manager and director and was satisfied plans are in place to recruit additional staff. This should help to balance the responsibility of supervisory visits and attendance at LAC and other reviews.</p>		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10) The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>As indicated above, the agency is managed professionally with clear lines of responsibilities and roles. Despite the current staffing shortfalls, foster carers are adequately supported by the manager, two social workers, the director and administrative staff.</p> <p>Supervision of foster carers is offered once weekly for four weeks after a child/young person is placed. This is followed up by periodic supervision every 2 weeks, then every four weeks.</p> <p>Support is also offered informally over the phone by the agency staff. In addition, foster carers confirmed they received training in several key areas relating to foster care work.</p> <p>The agency has plan to develop its foster care training to include NVQ programmes.</p>		

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

As indicated above, the agency offers a range of training programmes in safe care, health and safety, first aid, attachment, separation and loss, children in transition, choosing to foster, listening to children, disability awareness, child protection, identity and life story and managing difficult behaviour.

The inspector was satisfied the agency is meeting the NMS in this area.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

The administrator informed the inspector that social workers have responsibilities for ensuring all forms, records and documents are completed according to the agency's policies and procedures. When these tasks are satisfactorily completed, the fostering manager signs off each file in line with the agency's policy and procedure.

File auditing is carried out periodically by the manager, with assistance from the administrator. The inspector was satisfied the organisation of records at the agency was systematic, organised chronologically and enabled easy access when information needs to be retrieved.

Cases files were appropriately indexed with up to date information on monthly carers' reports, reviews and home visits. The children and young people's files were equally organised and kept in easily accessible format.

The inspector was satisfied all confidential information and case files were stored appropriately in locked cabinets. CRB results and other confidential records were stored separately with access limited to the manager and director.

The care plans and programmes of the children and young people were documented in uniformed style and format. The manager assured the inspector that the looked after children and young people are made aware of how they can go about requesting access to their records.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

As indicated above, the inspector was fully satisfied that all required and relevant documents and records were available for inspection.

The administrator, manager and director were all aware of what records were available, where and how they have been stored- electronically and hard copy versions. In addition, there was systems in place to help ensure renewals and updating of records are done on time.

The inspector was satisfied that appropriate reviews and auditing of records are carried out

and training and support is provided to the administrator and other staff to help enhance her skills and knowledge in this area.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:			28
Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:			27
Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:			6
Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:			16
Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:			4
Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £	325	Maximum £	450

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering service is based in a multi-storey office building in Northwest London with easy access to central Wembley. The main entrance to the building has a reception area and security system. All visitors have to sign in and escorted to the office they are visiting.

The fostering service is rented and the office occupies two rooms accessible only by the employees of the agency. The main office is well equipped with all necessary equipment and resources to help carry on the services of the agency.

The building is adequately resourced with a large communal conference room that is used by the agency to hold its panel and training meetings. There are also other communal facilities open to all occupants of the building, including a private car park.

Private meetings with foster carers and the children been looked after are held either in the director's office or the conference room.

The organisational and development plans for the agency include expansion into neighbouring county councils by March 2006 and purchase of its own premises by March 2007.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The information provided to the Commission by the director indicated the agency continues to be financially viable and has adequate financial resources to carry out its aims and objectives as outlined in its Statement of Purpose.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The director informed the inspector the accounts of the agency is audited externally. The agency's financial affair is also open to scrutiny and discussions by the panel members.

The agency is also audited and monitored annually by Pan London, this is in addition to the monitoring and reviews carried out by local authorities and other stake holders.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

The findings indicated each foster carer receives a weekly flat rate of £325. This goes up to £355 for carers who are looking after children/young people with special care needs. A top rate of £450 is also paid for remand placement.

Payments are made every two weeks and in addition to the fostering allowance agency pays children/young people birthdays, festivals and holiday allowance. The agency also pays respite allowance to foster carers once they have looked after a child/young person for one year.

The rates are also outlined in the Foster Carers' Guide and reviewed annually.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The procedures and guidelines for the panel was reviewed in the early part of 2005 as part of the agency's comprehensive review and updating of its policy and procedure documents.

The panel protocol has clear guidelines about the terms and conditions on which individual members are recruited. There is an annual training day for panel members and indications are that members do attend.

Each member signs a confidentiality bond in line with the requirements of the agency and other statutory requirements. Panel members are also paid an allowance for their work/attendance at panel hearings.

The inspector observed an all day panel meeting in March 2005. Panel members came from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Each member had relevant professional experiences in education, fostering, social work and management.

The inspector interviewed the chair and was fully satisfied she had adequate and appropriate professional experience to carry out her role. She stated the agency has been listening to advice offered by the panel on issues such as getting the right placements for LAC.

The chair also reported that the new foster panel procedures have been helping to ensure business is conducted more professionally and in line with statutory requirements and professional practices. The chair reported progress has been made in areas such as carrying out reviews of foster carers/LAC and introduction of the health and safety checklist.

The inspector observation indicated the panel meeting was well organised. Panel papers were issued to members several days before the meeting. Members are now required to prepare their questions in advance of the meetings.

Each member is given adequate time to question the social work assessors and prospective foster carers. The chair was well respected and the proceeding was managed professionally and in line with the agency's procedural guidelines.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This standard was not applicable and was not inspected.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
This standard was not applicable to this agency.		

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor

Signature

Date

PART D

PROVIDER'S RESPONSE

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on **28/02/2005** and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary

YES

Comments were received from the provider

YES

Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report

YES

Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate

NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 18 May 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required

YES

Action plan was received at the point of publication

YES

Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion

YES

Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion

NO

Provider has declined to provide an action plan

NO

Other: <enter details here>

NO

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I Mr Shadab Ahmad of Horizon Fostering Services confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I Mr Shadab Ahmad of Horizon Fostering Services am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____

Signature

Designation

Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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